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ABSTRACT

This document describes the principles in a learning college, opportunities to create learning colleges, and key factors in molding an institution into a learning college. The principles state that a learning college: 1) creates substantive change in individual learners; 2) engages learners in the learning process as full partners who must assume primary responsibility for their own choices; 3) creates and offers as many options for learning as possible; 4) assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities; 5) defines the roles of learning facilitators in response to the needs of the learners; and 6) succeeds with its learning facilitators only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for learners. Opportunities for creating a learning college include capitalizing on a natural trigger event, identifying needs through an assessment, building on existing innovations, and initiating conversations on learning. Finally, key factors for launching a learning college are building a critical coalition, creating an emerging vision, creating action plans, involving all stakeholders, ensuring appropriate support, creating an open system of communication, considering consultants and established processes, paying attention to language, reallocating resources, evaluating, and committing to the "long haul". Each of these principles, opportunities, and key factors are discussed in the document. Contains 31 references. (AMA)

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# LAUNCHING A LEARNING-CENTERED COLLEGE

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# Launching A Learning-Centered College

Terry O'Banion

# LAUNCHING A LEARNING-CENTERED COLLEGE

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# PREFACE

This monograph has been prepared as a guide for community college faculty, administrators, support staff, and trustees considering launching an institution-wide initiative to become more learning centered. It should also prove helpful to those institutions already involved in this process as a gauge by which to check their progress.

At the League for Innovation our surveys reveal that the great majority of community colleges in the United States and Canada are planning on or are beginning to be involved in reform efforts to transform their colleges into more learning-centered institutions. But at the present time there is not a great deal of experience to share; fewer than a dozen community colleges have been deeply engaged in their journeys to become more learning centered, and most of these for less than ten years.

We are fortunate, however, that a small group of pioneering institutions is leading the way, assessing progress and celebrating accomplishments. Through their experiences we know that the effort to become more learning centered has its rewards. As these colleges demonstrate:

- **Graduation rates of minorities can be doubled.**
- **Unions can support major changes in faculty roles and responsibilities.**
- **Employers can report 100 percent satisfaction with the skills of community college graduates.**
- **Colleges can eliminate unproductive layers of bureaucracy, ineffective services, and outdated curricula.**
- **The climate and effectiveness of decision making can be vastly improved.**
- **Student learning can be expanded and improved, and confirmed through widely agreed upon measures.**

Furthermore, we are fortunate that the leaders at these pioneering colleges are willing to go on record and share their experience. From their stories, and from my review of the literature and my consultations with dozens of community colleges interested or engaged in becoming more learning centered, I have crafted this monograph as a basic guide for leaders who wish to launch a learning-centered college.

To set the context, the monograph opens with a brief review of the Learning Revolution and the six principles of the Learning College I developed in the 1997 book, *A Learning College for the 21st Century*. Some suggestions for jump-starting a learning initiative are followed by key steps involved in launching a learning-centered college. Each step is illustrated with actual practices cited from the efforts of the pioneering colleges that are leading the way in the Learning Revolution. None of the leaders in these colleges claim to know all the answers to how an institution should make its journey. In fact, they are downright modest about their own accomplishments and are continuously searching for new ways to improve their efforts.

I am deeply indebted to the following leaders for sharing their work with me so I could share it with others:

- **Brian Desbiens, President, and Paul Smith, Facilitator of Organizational Transformation–Sir Sandford Fleming College, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada**
- **Byron McClenney, President–Community College of Denver, Denver, Colorado**
- **Jerry Moskus, President–Lane Community College, Eugene, Oregon**
- **Ned Sifferlen, President–Sinclair Community College, Dayton, Ohio**

I have also referenced the work of Valencia Community College, Orlando, Florida, cited in

the October 1998 issue of *Leadership Abstracts* prepared by Valencia's president, Paul Gianini.

As community colleges sit perched at the millennium to engage a new century, I hope that the momentum to become more learning centered in our policies, programs, practices–and in the use of our personnel–can be sustained for the long haul. If the Learning Revolution is to be more than the fad of the 90s, effective leaders at every level of the institution will need to rally around this opportunity to address fundamental issues regarding whether or not our efforts lead to improved and expanded student learning. The pioneering leaders whose work is cited in this monograph are convinced–as am I–that colleges can be transformed into more learning-centered enterprises. The transformation is not easy, but the journey is well worth the effort–and this monograph can help point the way.

Terry O'Banion
Newport Beach, California

# THE LEARNING REVOLUTION[1]

In the last decade of the twentieth century a revolution in learning swept through all sectors of education and began to have a profound impact on the educational enterprise. Some leaders (Dolence, 1998) began to refer to the 1990s as the Learning Age instead of the Information Age or Knowledge Age, in recognition of the impact of the Learning Revolution. The renewed interest in learning has been swift and far reaching:

- 1994–*Business Week* magazine declared a Learning Revolution in Progress.
- 1995–*Time* magazine featured a special section on the Learning Revolution.
- 1996–The first national conference on "The Learning Paradigm" was held in San Diego.
- 1997–The American Council on Education and the American Association of Community Colleges published *A Learning College for the 21st Century.*
- 1998–PBS and the League for Innovation in the Community College sponsored the third national teleconference on "The Learning College: A Progress Report."
- 1999–The Pew Charitable Trusts and the League for Innovation in the Community College initiated a national project to assess student learning outcomes.

These are only a few of the milestones in the rapidly spreading Learning Revolution. For the remaining year of this century, and for many years into the twenty-first century, the Learning Revolution will continue to be a leading theme of articles, books, conferences, commissions, and studies.

The Learning Revolution is not just an American phenomenon. In 1995 the Council of Presidents of the Province of Ontario in Canada released a commissioned paper, *Learning-Centered Education in Ontario Colleges*, that said:

> This paper is about significant change involving the nature of college programs. It is about a shift in educational design toward what has been termed "learning-centered" education. Many have begun this shift, but it remains difficult, in part because it goes to the root of our understanding of education, and, equally, to the root of our roles as students, staff and administrators (Council of Presidents, 1995, p. 1).

In the United Kingdom the Learning Revolution is also beginning to emerge as evident in the language used for a number of recently issued reports:

- *Learning Works*–June 1997
- *Higher Education in the Learning Society*–July 1997
- *Learning for the 21st Century*–November 1997
- *The Learning Age: A Renaissance for a New Britain*–February 1998

This current revolution in education is part of a larger social transformation. Peter Drucker, in *Managing for the Future*, succinctly captures this special period of change: "Every few hundred years throughout Western history, a sharp transformation has occurred. In a matter of decades, society all together rearranges itself–its world view, its basic values, its social and political structures, its arts, its key institutions. Fifty years later a new world order exists. . . Our age is such a period of transformation (1992, p. 95)." The Learning Revolution, "in a matter of decades," will fundamentally change the education enterprise.

[1] For a more extensive review of the Learning Revolution and the Learning College see the author's book *A Learning College for the 21st Century*. Oryx Press, 1997.

**A Revolution with a Purpose**

*In a nutshell, the purpose of the Learning Revolution is to place learning first in every policy, program, and practice in higher education by overhauling the traditional architecture of education* (O'Banion, 1997, p. 1). In the 1993 book, *An American Imperative*, the Wingspread Group on Higher Education said, "We must redesign all our learning systems to align our entire education enterprise for the personal, civic, and workplace needs of the twenty-first century" (Wingspread Group on Higher Education, 1993, p. 19). The Wingspread Group went a step further and indicated the challenge institutions of higher education will face if they are to implement the Learning Revolution: "Putting learning at the heart of the academic enterprise will mean overhauling the conceptual, procedural, curricular, and other architecture of postsecondary education on most campuses" (1993, p. 14).

While there seems to be a revolution or reform movement about every decade in education, the Learning Revolution is quite different from reform efforts of the past, as illustrated by its two distinct goals: 1) to place learning first in every policy, program, and practice in higher education, and 2) to overhaul the traditional architecture of education.

**Placing Learning First**

The current reform effort calls for institutions of higher education to make learning their highest priority. Many educators are offended by this recommendation because they believe they have always placed learning first. Of course educators at all levels place great value on learning, but institutional statements and reward systems often reflect other priorities.

Any student of education can cite the three primary missions most often articulated by universities: teaching, research, and service. However, in many universities, the reward system places higher value on research than on teaching and service. "Learning" is seldom, if ever, included as one of the primary missions, although its relationship to teaching, research, and service is clearly implied by most educators.

Teaching is probably the most universally acclaimed mission, for all levels of higher education. In the community college such strong value is placed on teaching that the institution is often referred to as "the teaching college." One of the most significant documents ever written on the community college, *Building Communities* (Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, 1998), highlighted over and over the central value placed on teaching in the community college: "Building communities through dedicated teaching is the vision and the inspiration of this report" (p. 8). "Quality instruction should be the hallmark of the movement" (p. 25). "The community college should be the nation's premier teaching institution" (p. 25).

The current reform effort does not ask institutions to place less value on teaching or other missions, but to review their statements and reward systems to ensure that learning is valued as visibly as teaching and other missions. In Barr's 1994 study of California community college mission statements, he noted, "It is revealing that virtually every mission statement contained in the catalogs in California's 107 community colleges fails to use the word 'learning' in a statement of purpose" (p. 2).

For community colleges that want to become more learning centered, it will make a difference in policies, programs, and practices if learning is embedded in the institutional culture as the highest priority. Community colleges that wish to make this perspective an integral part of their culture can ask two basic questions that will keep faculty, staff, trustees, and administrators focused on the major goal: 1) Does this action improve and expand learning?, and 2) How do we know this action improves and expands learning? These two questions can be applied to any area of activity in an institution to help its members become more aware of the importance of learning in everyday practice.

Precise answers to these questions about every institutional action will be hard to come by, but the very voicing of these questions will keep the transcendent goal of becoming a more learning-centered institution clear and visible for all to see.

**Overhauling the Traditional Architecture**

Every faculty member and administrator in education has been frustrated at some time with the traditional architecture of education that limits how they teach or manage and how students learn. Roger Moe, former majority leader of the Minnesota State Senate, has said, "Higher education is a thousand years of tradition wrapped in a hundred years of bureaucracy" (as cited in Armajani et al, 1994, p. 1). The current system is time-bound, place-bound, efficiency-bound, and role-bound.

The system is *time-bound* by credit hours and semester courses. College students are learning in blocks of time that are artificial. Excellent teachers know that learning is not limited to one-hour meetings held on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and they have been frustrated in teaching within these prescribed boundaries.

The system is *place-bound*. Learning is initiated, nurtured, monitored, and certified primarily by teachers in classrooms on a campus. We have experimented with distance education that takes courses off-campus, but while it has increased student access, it retains the old model of education. Distance education, for the most part, is a nontraditional delivery system for traditional education. Work-based learning was supposed to break up that model, but it does not. It extends the model but is controlled by it because work-based learning is built around the current structure of the school. It still binds the student to a place.

The system is *efficiency-bound*. Our model of education reflects in great part the adjustment to an agricultural and industrial economy of an earlier era. Public school students are still dismissed early in the afternoon and in the summers so they can work on farms that no longer exist. When the economy became industrialized, education responded by creating a lock-step, factory model, which is the basis of American education today. Academic credit, based on time in class, makes learning appear orderly. This model creates an efficiency system to award credentials. Grades are collected and turned into credits, and these compilations are supposed to represent profound learning.

Finally the system is *role-bound*, which may be its greatest weakness. In education, we make the assumption that one human being, the teacher, can ensure that thirty very different human beings, in one hour a day, three days a week for sixteen weeks, can learn enough to become enlightened citizens, productive workers, and joyful, lifelong learners. Then we assume that this one human being can repeat this miracle three more times in the same sixteen-week period for ninety additional individuals. We provide little comfort and support when teachers fail to live up to this role-bound myth.

If we are to make any progress toward implementing the Learning Revolution, we need to replace the current educational system with a system designed for the kind of society in which we live, designed for the kinds of students who attend college, and designed to take advantage of new research on learning and new applications of information technology.

## THE LEARNING COLLEGE

A number of community colleges have responded to the Learning Revolution by becoming more learning centered. The experiences of some of these pioneering community colleges, combined with the 38 years of community college experience of the author, have led to the creation of a new concept, the Learning College. This concept is in no way intended as the final answer for what community colleges should become, but it does provide a frame of reference institutional leaders can use to chart their own journey in becoming more learning centered. Each institution launching an initiative to become more learning centered should develop principles that represent the core values and commitments basic to that institution. Many of the principles that follow can be applied to most community colleges, but they will need to be tailored to the specific needs and resources of an institution. The list of principles will also need to be expanded to address the creativity exhibited by most community colleges.

*The Learning College places learning first and provides educational experiences for learners any way, any place, any time* (O'Banion, 1995-1996, p. 22). The model is based on the assumption that educational experiences are designed for the convenience of learners rather than for the convenience of institutions and their staffs. The Learning College is based on six key principles:

- The Learning College creates substantive change in individual learners.
- The Learning College engages learners in the learning process as full partners who must assume primary responsibility for their own choices.
- The Learning College creates and offers as many options for learning as possible.
- The Learning College assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities.
- The Learning College defines the roles of learning facilitators in response to the needs of the learners.
- The Learning College and its learning facilitators succeed only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for learners.

**Principle I**

*The Learning College creates substantive change in individual learners.* If the current reform efforts are worth the energy and time they will require, then community colleges should settle for nothing less than substantive change in individual learners. This is a goal highly desired from educational experiences for our own children and all those in our care. No faculty member, administrator, support staff, or trustee argues with this principle, but it is not used to guide action. Stated upfront and stated often, it can become embedded in the institutional culture, undergirding all other principles.

Institutional priorities, however, usually focus on the more obvious outcomes of learning, and are most often reported for groups: rates of graduation, persistence, or employment for selected cohorts. This is important information and must be collected by all institutions to satisfy external constituencies and to gauge average institution-wide success.

This general information provides only a rudimentary measure of institutional effectiveness, however. At some point in their efforts to become more learning-centered institutions, community college staff members should engage in a series of rich conversations about definitions of learning that go beyond institutional effectiveness data. There should be discussions regarding the differences among training, education, and learning. Complex constructs regarding surface learning, basic learning, hardy learning, and more powerful learning may emerge from the discussion of personal values and experience in education.

In my definition, learning kindles new ways of seeing, thinking, and doing that lead to changed behavior. If that definition is even partially

correct, then the institutional participants engaged in a conversation *about* learning may encounter new ways of seeing, thinking, and doing that will lead to changes in their behavior. In the Learning College, substantive change can occur in administrators, faculty, support staff, and trustees, as well as in students. Making learning a central topic of institutional conversation, and agreeing that substantive change in individual learners is a basic institutional principle, ensure that the current reform effort is a great deal more than business as usual.

**Principle II**

*The Learning College engages learners in the learning process as full partners who must assume primary responsibility for their own choices.* At the point a learner chooses to engage the Learning College, a series of services are initiated to prepare the learner for the experiences and opportunities to come. However, until there is a seamless system of education for lifelong learning based on principles similar to those of the Learning College, these services will be heavily focused on orienting the learner to new experiences and expectations that are not usually found in traditional schools. Two key expectations need to be communicated to new learners at the first stage of engagement: 1) learners are full partners in the creation and implementation of their learning experiences, and 2) learners must assume primary responsibility for making their own choices about goals and options.

The services include assessing the learner's abilities, achievements, values, needs, goals, expectations, resources, and environmental or situational limitations. A personal profile is constructed by the learner in consultation with an expert assessor to illustrate what this learner knows, wants to know, and needs to know. The learner's self-assessment is a key component. A personal learning plan is constructed from this personal profile, and the learner negotiates a contract that outlines the responsibilities of both the learner and the Learning College.

As part of the contract, the learner takes responsibility for selecting from among the learning options provided by the Learning College. The assessment information, the terms of the contract, historical records from previous learning experiences, work experience, external evaluations, and all other pertinent information are recorded on the learner's "smart card" which serves as a portfolio of information, a lifelong record of educational experiences. The "smart card," similar to an Automated Teller Machine (ATM) card widely used by banks, belongs to the learner, who is responsible for keeping it current with assistance from specialists in the Learning College. In addition to the "smart card," other educational institutions and employers can develop their own systems to verify what they need to know about the learner.

The Learning College also provides orientation and experimentation for learners who are unfamiliar with the learning environment of the Learning College. Some learners may need training in using technology, in developing collaboration skills, in locating resources, and in navigating learning systems. Specialists monitor these services carefully and are responsible for approving a learner's readiness to fully engage the learning opportunities provided.

In the Learning College, the orientation and experimentation process take as much time as is necessary to meet the needs of each learner. Some learners seeking minimal learning experiences about which they are very clear can begin their activities immediately following their first point of engagement. Some learners may wish to participate in the orientation and experimentation process for a few days or a few weeks. Some learners may be engaged in the process for several months. Since there are no restrictions on time and place for the engagement, there are no limitations governing the activities except the needs of the learner. There are many options for learners to engage the Learning College, including self-guided print and video modules, live and Internet-based activities, classes and laboratories on-campus, and individual consultations with a variety of specialists. Continuing learners soon learn to navigate the Learning College system and use it to their full advantage.

The student does not, however, drive all the choices regarding learning. Colleges are collections of wise educators who know a great deal about the larger values associated with a

college education. Faculty may want to require selected liberating experiences for students. A college might, for example, require all students to provide volunteer service to the community, examine their views on diversity, develop special skills such as how to access the Internet, express their creativity through some art form, or understand some special feature of their culture. A college has the right, perhaps even the responsibility, to provide the fullest education possible for its students. Its goal is not always best achieved if the collegiate experience is reduced to a shopping spree in which the customers select only the items with which they are already familiar.

Community colleges attempt to provide experiences that broaden and deepen the thinking of their students through programs such as critical thinking across the curriculum or required general education courses. Community college faculty should also continue to struggle to define what constitutes a common core of learning for all their students. However, in a more learning-centered college the options for how individuals learn the common core are greatly increased. The goal is to provide liberating experiences agreed upon by the faculty that are free of the constraints of the historical educational architecture.

**Principle III**

*The Learning College creates and offers as many options for learning as possible.* In the Learning College there are many options for the learner during the initial engagement and throughout the continuing educational activities–options regarding time, place, structure, staff support, and methods of delivery. The learner reviews these options and experiments with some that are unfamiliar.

Each learning option defines specific goals and competency levels needed for entry, as well as specific outcome measures of competency levels needed for exit. Learning Colleges are constantly creating additional learning options for learners, many of them suggested by learners based on their own experiences. A major goal of the Learning College is to create as many learning options as possible in order to provide successful learning experiences for all learners. If one option does not work, the learner should be able to navigate a new path to an alternative learning option at any point.

If a Learning College had to develop a full array of options from scratch, the task would be overwhelming and too costly. Fortunately, there are numerous resources available, many of them field-tested and free. Thousands of individual faculty members have designed better or alternative learning materials as part of their sabbaticals, on summer projects, with innovation grants from various institutions, and with support from federal and foundation grants. Individual colleges have initiated programs to design and to develop new learning opportunities for students, sometimes with a considerable commitment of college resources. Colleges have initiated consortia to work in collaboration with each other and with agencies and companies to produce new learning programs. State and federal agencies, especially the military, have created hundreds of learning options that are available at no cost. Business and industry have spent billions on training materials. Educational entrepreneurs such as book publishers, testing agencies, information networks, training organizations, and computer corporations, develop training materials that are often available to educational institutions for a fee paid by the students.

To "manage" the activities and progress of thousands of learners engaged in hundreds of learning options at many different times, at many different levels, in many different locations, the Learning College must rely on expert systems based on advancements in technology. Without complex, technological systems, the Learning College cannot function. Learning management systems are the breakthroughs that will free education and educators from the time-bound, place-bound, and role-bound systems that currently "manage" the educational enterprise.

**Principle IV**

*The Learning College assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities.* In the Learning College, the university ideal of a "community of scholars" is transformed into a "community of learners." The focus on creating

communities among participants in the learning process, on creating student cohorts, and on developing social structures that support individual learning, is a requirement of a Learning College, not just for students but also for the faculty, administrators, and support staff.

A number of learning theorists have noted the key role collaboration plays in learning. Learning is a social enterprise. Through social interactions, as well as through action on objects, learners make sense of the world (Abel, Cennamo, and Chung, 1996). Lane and Wenger (1990) suggest that knowledge needs to be presented in an authentic context (i.e. "real world" settings and applications that would normally involve that knowledge) and that learning requires social interaction and collaboration. There are examples of effective collaborative learning models at all levels of education.

We also know from experience that programs designed to build cohorts of students and engage them in a common experience or curriculum greatly increase retention and, ultimately, program completion. Nursing programs in community colleges have some of the highest gradution rates in all of education, in part because they are often highly selective, but also because a cohort is guided together through a rigorous competency-based curriculum. Nursing students study together and support each other, and there is no disincentive for all to succeed at high levels because students are not graded relative to each other (as on a Bell curve) but relative to a fixed performance standard, the state certification exam.

The most widespread form of collaborative learning in the community college takes place in "learning communities," a specific term for a curricular intervention to enhance collaboration and expand learning. "Learning communities . . . purposefully restructure the curriculum to link together courses or course work so that students find greater coherence in what they are learning, as well as increased intellectual interaction with faculty and fellow students" (Gablenick *et. al.*, 1990, p. 5). These collaborations are also referred to as learning clusters, triads, federated learning communities, coordinated studies, and integrated studies; but "learning communities" has emerged as the favorite descriptor. When the same 30 students enroll for nine credit hours in a sequence of courses under the rubric of "Reading, Writing, and Rats," they have enrolled in a learning community.

In the Learning College, some learning communities and collaborative learning activities do not look very much like classrooms, and many will have dynamics defined by characteristics of pace, distance, membership, and means of communication. For instance, as the number of adult workers returning to college for education and training continues to grow, the workplace becomes a likely venue for establishing learning communities. Workplaces that value and encourage lifelong learning–whether driven by altruism or enlightened self-interest–make ideal sites for communities of learners, as common interests may be readily determined and the level of resources available to support the community may be very high. In such models, video-on-demand can distribute information, including interactive training modules, directly to the desktop of employees; information resources can be concentrated at a common work location; and assessment services or learning specialists can be housed at the work site.

Powerful networking technology can also help nurture a learning community by assisting its members in communicating with each other in both synchronous and asynchronous modes. Certainly if courtship can be accomplished in Cyberspace, then learning communities can be formed there. The Electronic Forums established in the Maricopa Community Colleges are pioneering efforts to create communities of learners through technology networks.

The roles that college educators play in forming and supporting learning communities are yet to be thoroughly defined. However, in a Learning College, staff members recruit students into cohorts of common interests or circumstances. Process facilitators orient individuals and help them form groups or communities of learners. Resource specialists attend to the needs of both individuals and groups of learners. Learning facilitators design experiences that build upon group strengths and other dynamics. Assessment specialists design and implement valid assessments that can occur both individually and in the context of the learning community. The

Learning College is designed not only around the unique needs of individual learners, but also around their needs for association. The Learning College fosters and nourishes communities of learners as an integral part of its design and as a key process for creating substantive change in individual learners.

**Principle V**

*The Learning College defines the roles of learning facilitators in response to the needs of the learners.* Everyone employed in the Learning College is a learning facilitator, including categories formerly designated administration and support staff. Trustees are also considered learning facilitators as they exercise their responsibilities for governance and policy development in creating a more learning-centered institution. Every employee is linked to learners in the exercise of his or her duties, although some activities such as accounting may be less directly related. The goal is to have every employee thinking about how his or her work facilitates the learning process.

If the current members of the staff do not have the skills to meet the needs of the learners, the Learning College contracts with specialists to provide the needed services. Specialists are employed on a contract basis to produce specific products or deliver specific services; some may work full time, but many work part time, often from their homes, linked to the institution and to learners through technology. A number of specialists may be scattered around the world, providing unique services and special expertise.

The groundwork is already being prepared for these new roles to emerge. A 1996 report by the Ohio Technology in Education Steering Committee recommended the term "learning consultant" to best describe the educator of the future. The report stated:

As learning consultants, educators will play many roles:

- Learning consultants will be mentors–guiding each learner to his or her own chosen goals.
- Learning consultants will be facilitators of inquiry–coaching learners and helping them remove barriers as they move toward discovery.
- Learning consultants will be architects of connection–observing the needs of individual learners and joining them to information, experiences, resources, experts, and teams.
- Learning consultants will be managers of collaboration and integration–combining the needs and abilities of *their* learning communities with the needs and abilities of *other* learning communities (1996, p. 13).

Learners also participate as learning facilitators, and this role could be made part of the options negotiated in the orientation process. Many do not have time, but others welcome the opportunity to offer their experience and knowledge to assist other learners. Colleges already use students as lab assistants and tutors to facilitate learning. In the Learning College, these roles and opportunities are expanded to capitalize on the resources students bring to the educational enterprise.

The goal of Principle V is to use the resources of the institution to better meet the needs of students. It is also designed to free faculty from the restrictions placed on them by the historical role-bound architecture of education. In actual practice, colleges try to implement this principle by employing specialists (counselors, librarians, instructional designers, staff development trainers, etc.) and releasing selected teaching faculty from a class or two to conduct special projects. Still, the common denominator of the traditional role-bound model–one full-time faculty member teaching four or five courses each term–continues to dominate most of the thinking and most of the activities of the institution. An audit of the great variety of skills and expertise residing in the current faculty would be mind-boggling in its richness and complexity. Changing the historical architecture of education to allow the skills and expertise of the faculty to be better matched to the needs of learners would be an overwhelmingly complex task, but a task that

could lead to more satisfied and successful faculty and students.

**Principle VI**

*The Learning College and its learning facilitators succeed only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for learners.* "What does this learner know?" and "What can this learner do?" are questions that provide the framework for documenting outcomes, both for the learner and the learning facilitators. If the ultimate goal of the Learning College is to promote and to expand learning, then these questions are the yardstick by which the Learning College and staff are measured. Conventional information may be assembled for students (retention rates and achievement scores) and for faculty (ratings by students, peers, and supervisors; and community service), but the goal is to document what students know and what they can do, and to use this information as the primary measure of success for the learning facilitators and the Learning College.

All learning options in the Learning College utilize competency requirements for entrance and for exit. These competencies reflect national and state standards when available, or they are developed by specialists on staff or on special contract. Assessing a learner's readiness for a particular learning option is a key part of the initial engagement process and, thereafter, a continuing process embedded in the culture of the institution.

Learners negotiate and sign contracts for overall programs (e.g., general education core, basic skills, workplace skills) and may need to negotiate specific contracts for some learning options. Moreover, learners are encouraged to add competencies and goals beyond those established in the standards.

Portfolio assessment is one of the primary means by which learning is documented. A portfolio is a systematic, organized collection of evidence of what the learner knows and what the learner can do. It builds on prior information, is constantly revised and updated, and provides continuity for future learning activities. Specific benchmarks of achievement may be applied to determine credits earned, if credits continue to be the hallmarks for moving learners along the path of education.

Guiding the portfolio assessment process is one of the primary functions of learning facilitators. Since many of the learning options will be student-led collaborations, contract sessions with specialists, or experiences facilitated by tutors and coaches, learning facilitators will have more time for portfolio assessment. It may be possible to codify some of the assessment process for easier management, and technology advances will provide some assistance.

These six principles form the core of the Learning College. They refer primarily to process and structure and are built on the basic philosophy that the student's learning is central to all activities of the educational enterprise. There are certainly other principles that must be considered in creating this new paradigm of learning. Course content, funding, and governance are examples of pertinent issues that must be addressed and for which principles must be designed. Still, these six principles provide a starting point for those who wish to create a more learning-centered college, a college that places learning first and provides educational experiences for learners any way, any place, any time.

# How to Jump Start an Institution-Wide Learning Initiative

Many colleges are well into their journey to become more learning centered and do not need to be concerned about how to get started. For colleges that have not yet taken the first steps, however, there are a number of options worth exploring. The leaders who will initiate these first steps need to make sure that the action is appropriate for the climate and culture of the college. The options for launching an institution-wide learning initiative that are reviewed here include: capitalizing on a natural trigger event, identifying needs through an assessment, building on existing innovations, and initiating conversations on learning.

**Capitalize on a Natural Trigger Event**

Most educators are familiar with the concept of "the teachable moment." That moment is a specific point in time when everything comes together for a teacher and a student, and learning occurs in an extraordinary way. There is a confluence of forces, an "alignment of the planets," that prepares the way for the teachable moment. The outcome for the learner is an *"aha moment"*–an insight or an understanding that transcends everyday learning. The moment is a powerful experience and serves as a powerful motivator for searching out more such experiences.

For leaders thinking about launching a Learning College, it will be important to take advantage of "the teachable moment" in the life of the college. A more accurate reference for "the teachable moment" in organizations is a "trigger event," an event that launches energy and creates opportunity, an event that leaders can use to focus thought and rally troops to action.

There are a number of natural activities constantly unfolding in the life of a college that can serve as a "trigger event." Most often these are not dramatic events. Usually some project or process has been underway for months when a leader begins to see that the activity can provide leverage for channeling a vision that is much larger than was originally intended. Natural trigger events are usually chaotic until a leader transforms the event or events into a call for action. In retrospect, leaders create an anecdotal history of the event that makes it appear to be a planned process thoughtfully connected to the newly focused energy. In reality, most trigger events are not planned steps of action, but an awareness of the key role trigger events play in the change process may assist leaders in creating such events or at least increase their ability to recognize them when they do occur.

External forces often create situations that can be turned into trigger events by visionary leaders. When the Pew Charitable Trusts invited the Maricopa Comn.unity Colleges to join the Pew Higher Education Roundtables to "establish a foundation for action and exchange among leaders of institutions committed to fulfilling their education missions more effectively," the trigger was in place. A number of natural activities converged at Maricopa to create a propitious moment for expanded action. College staff had been engaged for several years in a major quality initiative to create more effective operations and more collaborative communication. For over a decade, Maricopa had been experimenting with applications of technology to improve teaching and learning and institutional management that made it the leading-edge community college in the nation in the use of technology. Furthermore, Maricopa had created an institutional culture in which innovation and creativity were championed and supported. When members of the Roundtable began their conversations, they came with a history that had prepared them for substantive change. Given the opportunity to examine the kind of future Maricopa needed to prepare for, the Roundtable participants chose to launch a long-range project to create a learning-centered institution. The Roundtable became the trigger event that would change Maricopa's future forever.

Along with Maricopa, many community colleges in the United States and Canada are currently engaged in exploring applications of total quality management or continuing quality improvement. Some of these colleges are also experimenting with a process adapted from Peter Senge's (1994) concept of the "learning

organization" that complements quality processes. Experimentation with these processes helps create a mind-set for change that can serve as a triggering event to launch a Learning College. Most colleges begin experimenting with quality processes at fairly low and safe levels, a wise move given the propensity of educators to be suspicious of major change efforts, especially those borrowed from business and industry. Early success is directed toward improving services, such as mail delivery, and may eventually lead to improving communication and even decentralizing decision making. At some point, often identified in retrospect, a leader or group of key stakeholders give voice to an opportunity to move quality processes to a new level and a new dimension. "What we are really about here is inventing our future, creating a whole new kind of institution that places the learner at the center of everything we do." Thus a vision is born from processes and activities already in place, processes and activities that can serve as a triggering event.

That is exactly what happened at Jackson Community College in Michigan. Jackson had been applying continuous quality improvement processes since 1990 and had found them to be quite useful. In fact the president of the college at that time played a key role in creating the Continuous Quality Improvement Network, a coalition of approximately a dozen community colleges committed to quality processes. In 1994, staff members at Jackson were still applying continuous quality improvement processes but with no intention to redesign the college to become a Learning College. On March 16, 1994, a triggering event occurred that dramatically changed the focus of the college's quality efforts. Staff at a training session were involved in exercises about systems design when a staff member leaned over to the president and asked, "Wouldn't it be great if we could design the college for real, rather than as an exercise?" In this case the triggering event was fairly dramatic and specific, but it took place within the context of ongoing processes. A visionary president seized the opportunity, and in a few weeks the college had launched a major initiative to become a Learning College.

For the leaders who want to make their institutions more learning centered, there are a number of natural and ongoing activities that can be molded into a trigger event. Every community college is struggling with how and how much technology to bring into the institution. Technology is a natural boundary breaker, a natural change agent, and it can lead to a triggering event. In developing the college's long-range technology plan, someone has to raise questions about the purpose of the technology. The first conversations are likely to focus on how technology will impact teachers and teaching. At some point, it must be asked how technology will be used to improve and expand learning, and this is the propitious moment for the leader or leaders to capitalize on the opportunity to launch a larger vision.

Deciding whether or not to construct a new building also provides an opportunity to raise key questions that can trigger new directions for the college. Although few colleges have the resources to construct new buildings these days, those that do must consider the advisability of building in the context of the opportunities created by distance learning technologies. Few institutions of higher education have examined the long-range impact of distance learning on their programs and practices. Such an examination, triggered by plans to construct new buildings, could in turn, lead to an examination of the college's overall philosophy and mission. Leaders can use information about national reform efforts and the examples of those colleges that have been transformed into Learning Colleges to broaden and to expand the college conversation about buildings into a conversation about change.

Institutional crises have always provided opportunities for initiating change efforts. A number of colleges have launched their initiatives to become Learning Colleges in response to sharp enrollment declines or dramatic reductions in resources. When a new president replaces a fired president, the potential and expectation for change may reach its highest point. Less dramatic, but longer-range crises such as the "graying" of the faculty or the changing nature of the students and surrounding communities can also serve as triggers for action when these changes are orchestrated by effective leaders who see the big picture.

In summary, major initiatives to transform community colleges into Learning Colleges do not suddenly appear full blown on the agendas of educational institutions. Institutional history, culture, and ongoing activities provide the bedrock from which a new vision must be chiseled. The vision that will guide the college into the future will often be connected to a triggering event embedded in the institution's daily life. The leader or leaders who want the college to move toward a new model of learning will be sensitive to the opportunities for change that already exist, and they will capitalize on these trigger events to move the college in new directions.

**Identify Needs Through an Assessment**

In those colleges where natural processes and activities do not readily suggest triggering events, leaders may have to be more proactive in creating a climate that encourages change. One way to create such a climate is to involve all college constituents in an assessment of institutional values, missions, programs, needs, processes, or structures. If Socrates was right that the unexamined life is not worth living, there may be some built-in motivation on the part of faculty and staff to examine college life, especially if there has not been such an examination in recent years or if there is some rationale for an examination, such as a changing student population, "graying" faculty, declining resources, or increasing technology. In unhealthy colleges where tensions between administration and faculty, or among other groups of stakeholders, focus all activity on faculty and staff concerns rather than on learner needs, such assessments will not work. In healthy colleges, however, an institution-wide assessment of some key issue tailored to the specific needs of the college may assist in triggering action that can lead toward an expanded model of learning.

In *An American Imperative*, the 1993 reform report that urged institutions of higher education to become more learning centered, there is a self-assessment instrument specifically designed to raise awareness about the college's commitment to placing learning first. The assessment is based on core questions from Howard Bowen's 1982 book, *The State of the Nation and the Agenda for Higher Education*. The questions are designed to help faculty and staff transcend the contentious issues that are present in the cultures of all colleges and universitites. The process suggests that all college staff and faculty, including trustees, begin with the following "First Questions":

- What kind of people do we want our children and grandchildren to be?
- What kind of society do we want them to live in?
- How can we best shape our institutions to nurture those kinds of people and that kind of society?

A college that allows sufficient time for a serious and substantive examination of these questions by a great majority of its members is preparing the way for major initiatives leading to significant change. These core questions are followed by a series of questions under the headings "Taking Values Seriously," "Putting Student Learning First," and "Creating a Nation of Learners." This assessment, introduced into the institution in an appropriate way (a strategy that will be different for each college), can unleash pent-up concerns and commitments that can translate into action toward becoming a Learning College.

Another assessment designed specifically for the community college can be found in the author's 1994 book, *Teaching and Learning in the Community College*. The final chapter is a set of "Guidelines for Auditing the Effectiveness of Teaching and Learning." The author makes the following case:

> The teaching and learning climate is the visible product of a particular institution's invisible values. What faculty, administrators, board members, and staff truly believe about students and their abilities to learn, and about teachers and their abilities to teach, is reflected in the climate of teaching and learning. It is a case of yin and yang in which values influence climate, and climate, in turn,

> influences values. The values and climate are made most visible in the written policies and statements, practices, and related behaviors of the stakeholders in the institution.
>
> An audit of the policies and statements, practices, and related behaviors is an important first step for leaders who wish to make teaching and learning the highest priority of the community college (O'Banion, 1994, pp. 304-305).

A series of questions about institutional values and practices related to teaching and learning are clustered under each of the following general areas:

- Institutional Policies and Statements
- Student Success Policies
- Curriculum Review and Development
- Instructional Innovation
- Information Technology
- Faculty Selection and Development
- Institutional Effectiveness

This teaching and learning audit, tailored to the specific needs and history of the institution, can serve as a trigger to elicit core values from an institution's policies and practices. In the hands of effective leaders, this information can be used to launch initiatives that place learning first.

The assessment instruments from *The American Imperative and Teaching and Learning in the Community College* are specifically designed to measure the extent to which a college places learning first. As such, these approaches may be too direct for some colleges that are still unsure about leaping wholeheartedly into explorations of new models of learning. For colleges that desire to move more slowly but want to use an assessment approach to stimulate action, there are numerous instruments on institutional climate and institutional effectiveness that may better serve their purposes. A checklist (Armes and McClenney, 1990) derived from the report, *Building Communities*, encourages evaluation and discussion of a number of issues that surfaced in the key report from the Commission on the Future of the Community College. This report has been widely circulated in community colleges, and the checklist raises important issues that can lead to discussions regarding new approaches to learning.

All community colleges are periodically accredited, and the accrediting process is an ideal opportunity to examine a college's commitment to placing learning first. In the past, accreditation processes did not directly address learning as the key mission and value of an institution, but more recent emphasis on student outcomes helps to redress this oversight. For a college that wishes to become more learning centered, however, leaders will need to expand and enhance the accreditation process to tailor it to their own purposes. The accreditation process can be designed to focus more directly on learning by incorporating some of the questions from the first two instruments described above. In this way, a scheduled college activity such as accreditation can be used to trigger increased activity to move the institution toward becoming a Learning College.

**Build on Existing Innovations**

Since their beginning almost 100 years ago, community colleges have been institutions given to innovative practices and programs. In fact, the community college as an institution is one of the most important innovations in the history of higher education.

The 1960s was the "Golden Age of Innovation" for community colleges. Driven by the demand for access, the community college of the 1960s grew rapidly and experimented constantly in response to new roles, new needs, and new students. The League for Innovation in the Community College was born during this period as a reflection of the innovative spirit of this rapidly expanding sector of higher education. However, during the middle 1970s and into the early 1980s, interest in innovation declined as complex social and economic forces altered the environment in which innovation had flourished. Cross observed at the time, "the late 1970s and early 1980s represent a plateau between two periods of high energy and a sense of mission in the community colleges" (1981, p. 113).

That plateau was not to last for long. "As the 1980s passed into the 1990s, innovation is returning to center stage. At every level of education, in all parts of the country, and for a variety of reasons, there is a renaissance of innovation" (O'Banion, 1989, p. 10). The resurgence of innovation in the community college began in the middle 1980s, reflecting the energy generated by the reform movement initiated by the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*.

> Shocked out of the doldrums of the 1970s by dozens of national reports on the decline in the quality of education, community colleges, along with other institutions of higher education, are committed to overcoming the problems of the past decade. College leaders and faculty are beginning to recognize, on the one hand, the lack of quality in their programs, and, on the other hand, the need for increased quality if the very nation is to flourish. These factors are driving forces for innovation (O'Banion, 1989, pp. 10-11).

So while reform was being advocated, community colleges were going about their business "reforming" practices by introducing a variety of innovations, including classroom assessment, learning communities, distance learning, tech-prep, business and industry services, distinguished teaching chairs, and a host of others. These innovations, however, were not cast in a framework of major reform. They emerged in isolation, each with its champions, and were implemented as stand-alone innovations disconnected from the emerging reform efforts to place learning at the center of the educational enterprise.

At this point no leader has attempted to mobilize the range of independent innovations that currently grace the education landscape and use these to support and guide the development of a Learning College. Such action could be a trigger event leading to substantive change.

The following innovations could provide the building blocks for a Learning College:

- active and contextual learning used in tech-prep, school-to-work, and service learning;
- collaborative learning as expressed in learning communities, electronic forums, and in study groups such as those pioneered by Uri Triesman;
- improved and expanded approaches to assessment and outcome measures as demonstrated by personal portfolios, experiential learning, and skills standards;
- increased focus on the customer as implemented in customized programs, service kiosks, and learner-centered advising;
- expanded and more flexible structures as seen in open-entry/open-exit programs, distance learning, information networks, and differentiated staffing;
- improved teaching as expressed in classroom assessment, distinguished teaching chairs, and teacher formation as championed by Parker Palmer;
- continuous quality improvement processes to flatten organizations, increase collaboration, and empower participants;
- application of technology to expand knowledge bases, data collection and analysis, communications networks, and time and information management;
- experimentation with the allocation of resources around concepts of performance-based funding and learning-outcomes funding; and
- new models of decision making such as shared governance and the Carver governance model championed by the Association of Community College Trustees.

The challenge for leaders is to create a new framework from existing innovations by cobbling these innovative practices and programs into a newly assembled *gestalt* moving toward the Learning College. This approach has the

advantage of building on what many key faculty and staff in the college are already doing. It is nonthreatening and avoids the defensiveness that comes with approaches based on rejecting old paradigms and pledging allegiance to new paradigms. Rounding up the innovations that already exist in many colleges and aligning them with concepts and values expressed in learning-centered paradigms has great potential for triggering a major reform initiative.

**Initiate Conversations on Learning**

The Learning Revolution has been in process for over five years, and a number of community college faculty, administrators, and trustees have been reading articles and books and attending conferences on issues related to learning. *The Learning Revolution: A Guide for Community College Trustees* was distributed to all community college trustees by the Association of Community College Trustees in the spring of 1997. As of the summer of 1998, over 12,000 copies of *Creating More Learning-Centered Community Colleges* had been distributed by the League for Innovation. In January of 1999 Palomar College sponsored the third annual conference on the "New Learning Paradigm." In addition, PBS and the League for Innovation cosponsored three national teleconferences in 1997-98 and a series of monthly articles in *Community College Week* anchored by an Internet bulletin board, all on issues related to the Learning Revolution and the Learning College. As a result of these activities, and many others, an increasing number of community college faculty, staff, and trustees are well aware of the issues related to the Learning Revolution and are eager to address these issues on their campuses.

When the League for Innovation surveyed the presidents of its 600-plus Alliance for Community College Innovation member colleges, they indicated strong interest in the Learning College concept. In a 1997 survey 84 percent of the presidents strongly or very strongly agreed that their institutions would "move to become more learning centered." In a survey a year later, 73 percent of the colleges had launched an initiative to become a more learning-centered institution. Most had already reworked their mission or vision statements to reflect an emphasis on learning.

Leaders who wish to begin an institutional journey to help their colleges become more learning centered can capitalize on this state of interest and readiness by creating "conversations on learning" across the college. A "conversation on learning" is a focused discussion, involving 10-12 participants and led by an experienced facilitator, that has as its goal increased and expanded learning on the part of participants. The conversation is usually scheduled for two-hour periods weekly or biweekly over a semester or a year. Participants are provided brief reading materials to stimulate discussion, may participate in structured exercises, and work toward specific goals. All topics relate to learning. While the author knows of no written guidelines for designing and conducting these "conversations on learning," there are highly competent instructional design specialists and staff development officers working in community colleges today who could synthesize the existing disparate efforts to create the processes and materials required to conduct such conversations. Carefully planned, perhaps as a series of staff development programs throughout the year, this approach would allow the interests and concerns of faculty and staff to surface in an open system rather than within the context of a predetermined strategic plan. The conversations would create awareness, expand knowledge and understanding, and possibly motivate action. Depending on the culture of the institution, conversations may work best when they are cross-functional, with representatives from a variety of areas within the college. In other cases conversations could be limited to representatives from specific disciplines or programs. Some conversations would thrive if students, trustees, secretaries, or community representatives were included. All conversations should be offered on a voluntary basis or as one of the options for scheduled activities in which faculty and staff are expected to participate. The overall goal is to create as much interest as possible in issues related to the Learning Revolution and to identify those in the institution who can provide leadership and support for an institution-wide learning initiative.

The following questions suggest the richness of the topics that can be included in "conversations on learning":

- What kinds of learning do we value most?
- What conditions do we need to create to best support the kinds of learning we value most?
- How do we measure the kinds of learning we agree to produce?
- What are the primary learning styles of our students, and which of these can we best accommodate?
- How can we provide more learning experience options for our students to respond to their diverse learning styles?
- How do we distinguish between learner-centered education and learning-centered education?
- How can we use technology to help our students extend and expand their learning?
- What criteria do we need to apply in selecting new faculty, administrators, and staff to help ensure we are becoming a more learning-centered institution?

These are some of the basic questions to help planners begin, but more questions and issues can be identified from an institution's history, and many more will emerge when the serious conversations begin. It is important to keep the conversations on a positive note as much as possible and to create a framework so that participants are working toward visible goals. Faculty, administrators, and staff should welcome the opportunity to participate in conversations that have intellectual substance on issues about which they care deeply, but the process needs to be carefully designed, and the purpose needs to be made clear. The overarching purpose of these "conversations on learning" is to create the conditions that lead to a commitment to launch an institution-wide initiative to become more learning centered.

## KEY STEPS IN LAUNCHING A LEARNING COLLEGE

Once a Learning College has been launched–by capitalizing on a trigger event, by identifying needs through an assessment, by building on existing innovations, by holding "conversations on learning," or by whatever means leaders may choose from their store of creativity–there are key elements or strategies that must be designed and followed to steer the Learning College project through institutional waters toward landmark islands where successes can be declared.

The strategies are idiosyncratic to the culture of the institution and the character and abilities of its leaders. The strategies are not linear or formulaic, as they often appear in written descriptions, including the steps that follow. Some are more important than others, but all may be of value. Institutions need to choose and experiment with strategies that appear appropriate to their needs; strategies that do not work need to be revised or discarded. In the final analysis, institutions must create their own set of strategies for becoming a more learning-centered institution. The following strategies are gleaned from the literature and from the experiences of a number of pioneering community colleges to serve as suggestions for those in charge of steering the Learning College initiative.

### Build a Critical Coalition

Major new reform and renewal efforts usually begin with a handful of people. In the case of the Learning College, several staff members might have heard a speaker at a conference or read an article that trigged their interest. The dialogue begins and more staff members join in. The CEO may have initiated the first discussion or, at least, is soon drawn into the ever-widening circle.

At some point in these early discussions, a leader, usually the community college president or an academic officer, or a key group, such as a task force or a special committee, creates opportunities for next steps. The leader or leaders might articulate the broader theme(s) embedded in these early discussions and encourage continuing discussion, or, if they are more aware and committed to change, may apply one of the ideas reviewed in the previous section to jump-start the action. In any case, once it is clear that the elements of a renewal effort are beginning to emerge, a critical coalition of other key players must be created to achieve a critical mass that will sustain further action. The coalition must include the institution's senior administrators. "All the quality experts agree that if any quality program is going to succeed, it must involve the top. Without the commitment of senior management, nothing gets better" (Dobyns and Crawford-Mason, 1991, p. 8).

John Kotter of the Harvard Business School describes how the coalition works in business:

> In successful transformations, the chairman or president or division general manager, plus another 5 or 15 or 50 people, come together and develop a shared commitment to excellent performance through renewal. In my experience, this group never includes all of the company's most senior executives because some people just won't buy in, at least not at first. But in the most successful cases, the coalition is always pretty powerful–in terms of titles, information and expertise, reputations and relationships. (1995, p. 62).

In the community college the coalition is most often convened by the president or chancellor and will likely include vice presidents; key staff in technology and staff development; and key leaders from the faculty, trustees, and students-and perhaps key representatives from the community. In very small community colleges the coalition may include four to six staff in the first year; in large community colleges the coalition may include 20 to 30 key representatives.

President Paul Gianini at Valenica Community College (Florida) describes the process: "In 1995, we decided to deliberately craft a transformation effort to institutionalize effective innovations and to focus on improving measurable learning outcomes. An institutional leadership team comprised of faculty, staff, and administrators took charge of designing and implementing

processes to enable Valencia to transform itself. We felt it was essential that an independent, collaborative group guide the process, one that has no other mission and whose meetings would not be consumed with the daily operational issues at a college. Under the guidance of this Leadership Team, we have undertaken a range of activities focused on collaborative approaches to becoming more learning centered."[2]

In most institutions coalition teams seldom emerge in orderly fashion as part of a carefully designed plan as they did at Valencia. In actual practice coalitions emerge from the ongoing work of leaders who are trying to make a difference. Ned Sifferlen, president of Sinclair Community College (Ohio), remembers when the first critical coalition at Sinclair was formed in response to quality questions raised during the development of an academic assessment plan. Subsequently, the Quality Council was formed which produced an Institutional Effectiveness Model that incorporated vision, mission, core indicators of effectiveness, and key performance indicators that measured progress toward continuous improvement targets.

In 1998, a Strategic Planning Task Force was created to ensure a smooth transition from the foundation established by the Quality Council to a strategic plan for the institution. In January 1999, the trustees participated in a process learning activity focused on the principles of the Learning College, the results of which were integrated into college strategy. Finally, a new Center for Interactive Learning (CIL) opened Fall Quarter 1998 to serve as a test bed for innovation related to the Learning College. One function of the CIL is to serve as an incubator where faculty members redesign curricula, investigate new learning methods, develop interactive instructional materials, and work out implementation plans to replicate and disseminate successful pilot projects. The success of the various coalitions that emerged from the ongoing work of the college is evidenced in innovative projects that are highly visible in the CIL.

Leaders at Sir Sandford Fleming College (Ontario, Canada) indicate that it is hard to pin point when, where, or how they decided to become a learning-centered college. College leaders had been involved in a series of change processes for some time and had developed a Master Academic Framework that served to guide many of their efforts. Paul Smith, facilitator of organizational transformation at Fleming, said, "We actually have a variety of coalitions, both formal and informal, each of which is championing change related to an aspect of the new vision. Importantly, these coalitions, made up of influential leaders and staff who are action oriented, span all levels of the organization, including the board, students, faculty, College Council, and increasingly, cross-functional task groups. We gain momentum and synergy from this multifaceted approach to change through the ripple effect." Fleming has created a College Leaders Team which consists of the members of its senior leaders team, academic leaders team, two union presidents, two student presidents, and the chair of the college council. The College Leaders Team oversees the reallocation of resources and the revision of the college vision. There is clear recognition and commitment, however, to making sure that many coalitions of interested and committed staff members emerge across the institution.

Jerry Moskus, president of Lane Community College (Oregon) indicates that "the culture of Lane Community College is adverse to grand plans launched from on high."

A major factor in the success of the learning-centered college movement at Lane is its origins in a visioning retreat of the College Council, a broadly representative group of faculty, classified staff, students, managers, and the president. A vision that emerged from this retreat–*quality learning experiences in a caring environment*–represented a consensus among many campus leaders, and thus it generated commitment from all campus groups. The visioning retreat might have had much less impact at Lane without the support of the faculty and classified employee unions. Union leadership was represented on the College Council and participated in creating the new vision. It soon became apparent that union leaders were deeply committed to the learning-centered vision and wanted to actively support its implementation. The

[2] Many of the quotes in this section on key steps are from statements provided by the leaders acknowledged in the *Preface* in response to a request from the author for examples. Citations have been avoided for easier reading.

classified union has played a major role in the success of the Students First! project, a total redesign of student services; and the faculty union has partnered with management to lead a project to redesign instruction. The College Council, broadly representing all key groups in the institution, including two key unions, serves as a critical coalition and a sounding board to guide the work of Lane's efforts to become more learning centered.

The critical coalition(s) becomes the first laboratory for testing out processes that will be used later in institution-wide efforts. Care must be taken to build a sense of trust and community among the members of the coalition, and special attention must be given to ensuring that each member understands the need for the project and the concepts involved in a Learning College. A great deal of reading is required. Retreats of two to three days are helpful in building a sense of community and in planning strategies. The coalition that is to guide the Learning College project must be powerful enough in its representation, and in its understanding and commitment, to withstand the forces resistant to change that will soon emerge. The membership of this early coalition may change at a later time when other structures and processes have emerged, perhaps taking on an oversight role, but in the beginning its formation is critical to success.

**Create an Emerging Vision**

Early in the project a written statement of the institutional vision for becoming a Learning College emerges. The vision statement for the Learning College is the guiding star by which leaders will steer their activities. The vision statement is brief–sometimes no more than a paragraph–and is a clear and vivid account of what participants want the Learning College to become. "The power of vision derives from its ability to capture the hearts and minds of an organization's members by setting forth a goal that is both feasible and uplifting" (Wilson, 1996, p. 5). Answers to "First Questions" suggested in an *American Imperative* such as, "What kind of people do we want our children and grandchildren to be?" can help provide responses for framing the vision statement.

Wilson (1996) defines vision as a "coherent and powerful statement of what the organization can and should be some set number of years hence" (p. 3). He notes that vision differs from, but complements, mission and philosophy.

> *Mission* states the basic purpose of the organization, defines its relationships to other organizations and constituencies, and sets general objectives. *Philosophy* articulates the values that should guide organizational behavior, defines the character of relations with stakeholders, and sets the style and culture of the organization. *Vision* builds on these statements to describe the future size, shape, and texture of the organization (that is, one should be able to get a good feel for the future organization from the vision statement); it sets specific goals and, more important, drives and guides action to achieve those goals (p. 3).

The critical coalition often drafts the first vision statement, relying on one or two wordsmiths who are always present in educational groupings. The first draft is often murky and has an unfinished quality, but it begins to rally support and commitment from the coalition team. Over a period of months the vision evolves with more stakeholders contributing their views until key ideas hold up through each iteration.

The process should not be hurried, for this is the stage in which individuals are examining their own values and exploring the outer limits of positions others will tolerate and support. The process must address the criticisms of cynics and the dreams of visionaries. A balance must be struck between the ideal and the practical. Eventually, perhaps a year or more later, the vision statement is formed and agreed upon by the stakeholders.

The nature of vision statements and the process by which they are created reflect the rich diversity of ways community colleges approach change at their institutions. At Sinclair the vision statement of the institution is reflected in the vision statement of the Center for Interactive

Learning: "a place where people of diverse backgrounds can see and experience the future of learning and work. The CIL is a place where everyone is a student. In the Center, we can fearlessly try out new ways of learning and teaching, evaluate our experiments, and ponder their implications."

At Lane, the president and his assistant prepared an idea paper as a first draft for the college's new vision statement. Influenced by their reading about "high performance work organizations," the authors envisioned a new Lane that would be values driven, team based, and collaborative, and characterized by open communication. They developed the idea that everyone on campus was to be a learner and that "learning" would become the college-wide, unifying value. The vision paper was revised a number of times with a great deal of feedback from campus constituents. The final paper has been distributed to every employee of the college.

In the late 1980s the president of the Community College of Denver (CCD), Byron McClenney, opened a convocation followed by a day-long activity in which faculty members and other staff contributed ideas that would lead CCD to a new commitment to accountability, assessment, and student success. In subsequent years, the vision statement has been revised several times to maintain continued staff involvement and to ensure that the vision statement reflects new challenges and opportunities.

At Fleming College, President Brian Desbiens notes, "We would emphasize that the real challenge is to develop a vision that reflects and is grounded in the future and thus pulls the organization toward it. Once the vision is created, the college can identify the steps required to close the gap between the present and future." Although Fleming has been guided by a vision statement for a number of years, leaders indicate that it is time to revisit the process to make sure they are addressing current problems and future challenges that may have emerged in the last several years. The revision process will start with a small task group of about 10 people who will draft a paper which (1) identifies key trends; (2) identifies critical questions to be answered; and (3) develops some scenarios or range of responses to these questions. The 10 people will include members of the college staff, a board member, and a student leader. The paper will be circulated widely, and a variety of mechanisms will be used to obtain feedback and generate discussion. Leaders expect the project to take approximately six months, perhaps longer, since the goal is to create a vision all staff understand and support. Leaders indicate, "We will try to develop a *revolutionary* vision which represents some quantum leaps for us over the next five to ten years, but which will be implemented in an *evolutionary* manner consistent with our culture and resources. In our experience, once we develop and adopt a vision, the hard work begins, specifically, helping all staff to 'paint themselves into this picture' in behavioral terms."

**Create Action Plans**

The creation of a vision statement with buy-in from the great majority of college members is a significant step for institutions committed to change. In some instances this task is so challenging that leaders are reluctant to initiate the next, more challenging step, which is to create action plans that will bring the vision to life. Unless college leaders move quickly, however, to create action plans with clear directions for steps to be taken and milestones by which to gauge progress, the initiative to become more learning centered will flounder at this critical juncture. The action plans place in clear relief the key policies, programs, and practices that will translate the elegant phrases of the vision statement into reality.

The action plan does not need to be spelled out in great detail at this point, but there must be a clearly articulated pathway for change, a framework for next steps, to make sure that momentum is not lost. College leaders at Fleming said, "We identified the tasks and processes we would be engaged with during the major restructuring process and provided timelines so the staff could gauge our progress. We provided frequent and regular communications about our progress, and these communications provided factual information, progress toward timelines, and also acknowledged and addressed the

affective dimensions of the change process. We paid special attention to stress, depression, grief, and loss among our many college members which often results from major institutional change. When we met our timelines, staff had more confidence in the change process. We were also able to announce with some confidence when the 'worst' part of the change was over and that we could now focus on consolidating the changes, making the new model work, and most importantly, reinvesting our resources to move us forward."

At Valencia four action teams were created, and more than 180 college members volunteered to participate in team activities. Members of each team selected a facilitator and began their work by reading and discussing selected literature relevant to their charge. Each team developed a charter, and members committed to attend meetings over a six-month period to create plans. College staff who did not participate on teams agreed to review and comment on draft products developed by the teams. This helped to facilitate college-wide consensus as actions unfolded.

Valencia's Short Term Action Team identified actions that would not take a great deal of work to help the college become more learning centered and recommended these for immediate implementation. The Vision and Organizational Character Action Team continued to work on a draft vision statement to make sure that it reflected the college's core values, purpose, and mission. The other action teams referenced the draft statement of core values to help guide their work. The Core Process Action Team focused on assessing the college's central operations. This team developed a set of guidelines for realigning core processes of the college, which included designing and revising job descriptions and evaluating results achieved through new uses of technology. The Core Competencies Action Team set as its goal the identification of key competencies for students that embody the heart of the Learning College. Not only will the team identify key competencies, it will also recommend processes to nourish them. The goals of this team strike to the heart of the initiative to become a more learning-centered institution, and its work is ongoing.

As part of the fall opening conference in 1997, Valencia sponsored an institution-wide forum for interested faculty to review reports from each of the four action teams and to consider their recommendations. More than 300 faculty members attended these sessions and met in small groups to review recommendations and to provide feedback on next steps.

As both these examples illustrate, the action steps provided opportunities for members of the college community not only to help establish directions, but also to respond and react to directions recommended by groups of their colleagues. The need to involve all stakeholders in the institution in the transformation process is important at all points but especially when the major action steps are determined.

**Involve All Stakeholders**

In a community college the key stakeholders include administrators, full-time faculty, support staff, students, and trustees. Depending on the culture of the institution and its capacity to manage complexity, part-time faculty and community representatives may be included as stakeholders.

The new "science" of management and leadership that prescribes flattened organizations, open communication, and empowered participation makes a strong case for involving all stakeholders in major reform efforts. Margaret Wheatley, an organizational change consultant, says, "Any change program that insists on defining how things ought to be done, that tries to impose a structure on everyone–without their involvement–works against our natural tendencies" (Brown, 1994, p. 24). Wheatley believes:

> Change is a capacity built into nature and, I would add, a capacity built into human nature. . . People are not inert, resistant lumps. We have had years and years of believing that without our efforts people will do nothing; without our plans and designs, our organizations will fall apart. But this is not the world we live in. Organizational leaders need to realize that complex systems can emerge, not from

their designs, but when individuals interact with one another around some simple, straightforward principles of interaction and purpose (p. 24).

Wheatley goes on to say:

> You need deep and meaningful involvement of the whole organization. This seems like an insurmountable barrier, to involve the whole organization, but I believe the starting point for real change is to focus energy and direction on this one key question: "Can we involve the expertise and experience of *everyone* in the organization?" We can't ignore that question. We've got to figure out how we can avoid the temptation to design things for people instead of engaging them in creating their own responses to change (p. 26).

Few community college presidents will argue against the importance of involving all stakeholders in the process of creating a Learning College, but many will be unsure of how to manage this process. It is more practical to set a goal of involving all stakeholders who want to participate, and providing numerous opportunities for their participation. Stakeholders can participate in institution-wide convocations, workshops and seminars, and special training sessions. The staff development program can be reengineered to focus on activities related to the Learning College, perhaps in the form of "conversations on learning." In-house newsletters can provide important information regarding the Learning College project. In some cases, a special publication will need to be created to carry the message, as was the case with Miami-Dade's Teaching and Learning Project, a major reform effort initiated in the 80s. Copies of key documents that evolve from project activities, such as the vision statement, and later documents, such as new policies for assessing students or selecting faculty or rewarding and promoting support staff, will need to be sent to every stakeholder for review and response. Universal opportunity to participate, not universal agreement, is the goal. Some proposed changes may need to be put to a vote.

At Valencia, leaders believe that transformation in higher education is made possible by collaboration. "If we have found one lesson to be more important than any other, it is this: higher education rests on a shared governance model. We have found that for such a change to be made, agreement on the changes must be reached collaboratively. In addition, what we have agreed upon has become conceptually stronger as a result of this collaboration. We find most useful a process of collaborative decision making that actively engages all those who want to participate in informed dialogue about the college's present and future. Still, this process has its challenges. Some college members feel that we are holding ourselves back when we allow time for full participation in the consideration of ideas and actions. Others caution that too fast a pace will derail the change process. Through our mistakes as well as our successes, we have come to see that faculty and administrative leaders must be as committed to the collaborative process as they are to the change agenda itself. They must be willing to trust their colleagues as professionals and to rely on one another's judgment."

Following the visioning retreat at Lane Community College that effectively launched Lane's learning initiative, the president and vice presidents met with every department on campus to explain the new vision and to secure feedback. Still, the Learning College concept did not really begin to gain a foothold on campus until two projects were initiated. The redesign of student services was based on advice from many staff and groups of students. The Strategic Learning Initiative, a project to redesign the instructional program, attracted large numbers of faculty. President Jerry Moskus said, "We began to see the ideas take hold the more we involved the members of our college."

At Lane, much of the current momentum of the learning movement results from a number of cross-functional, vertically integrated, permanent teams that address key issues on campus, such as technology planning, student and staff diversity, strategic planning, facilities planning and management, and enrollment management. "We involve all the stakeholders in these very

important teams that move Lane's action forward."

At Fleming, "Consultation is our middle name and is deeply embedded in our culture." Fleming also uses cross-functional teams to solve problems that cut across areas and functions. In addition, the College Council at Fleming is composed of elected representatives from all stakeholder groups and meets monthly to advise the president and monitor and recommend action on college-wide issues that can enhance the college environment.

**Ensure Appropriate Support**

*Appoint a Project Manager.* In addition to the continuing overall involvement and support of the college's CEO, a project manager should be appointed to coordinate the various activities of the Learning College initiative. Such an appointment signals the value the institution places on the project. The project manager should be a well-respected member of the college community. The staff development officer or the TQM coordinator might be considered, or a faculty leader who could be released from teaching duties for a period of several years. The project manager needs time to catch up on the related literature including educational reform, organizational change, leadership development, brain-based learning, information technology, continuous quality improvement, and assessment. If the project manager is already trained in skills to facilitate groups, that is a great asset. The project manager must work closely with the CEO and the coalition team to keep the Learning College project on target.

At Fleming, a special position was created called "Facilitator of Organizational Transformation," which functions as a project manager for the institution's initiative to become more learning centered. The individual reports to the president and is a member of the Senior Leaders Team. The person in the position is responsible for facilitating, planning, developing, and implementing organizational transformation initiatives across the college and is expected to provide leadership in all areas of change management. Part of the rationale for creating the role is to assist the college in developing and maintaining the momentum for change and in resisting the tendency to regress to the old ways of doing business. The role is intended to be a temporary one, since it is assumed that over time the functions will be performed by the Human and Organizational Development Division or other leaders as part of their regular leadership roles. The position is reviewed periodically to refocus the role on the next stage of transformation and to assess continuing need for the position. Fleming chose specifically to staff the position with a member of the college community who had credibility with staff because of a long history with the college and a thorough understanding of Fleming's culture. At various times the incumbent has served as a faculty member, a dean, director of staff development, and director of planning and special projects.

A number of colleges have attempted major reforms, including efforts to become more learning centered, through faculty committees and task forces. Some CEOs take pride in the fact that their initiatives are faculty driven and created from the bottom up. Such approaches can be very successful because they are faculty led, but they can be even more successful if a project coordinator is assigned to the faculty committee. Faculty committees do not have time to follow through on the details of a major initiative.

*Provide Support for the Project.* As difficult as it is in these times to allocate resources for new projects, a modest budget should be created for project activities. In most colleges, this budget can be created by reallocating funds from current budgets in staff development, travel, and internal communications. The president's "discretionary fund" can also be tapped.

Support will need to be provided to train facilitators. A change effort of the magnitude envisioned here will work only if many staff members participate in carefully designed sessions to increase their understanding of the issues and to elicit their participation. Building a new set of shared values across a campus community, by involving more representatives of more stakeholder groups than has probably ever occurred, is a monumental effort. Helping representatives from various groups learn how to operate in newly formed teams is a significant undertaking. Colleges cannot achieve these goals

unless they become learning organizations with all stakeholders participating as learners.

In Lane Community College's initiative, many teams, clusters, and groups were created to carry out the business of developing a more learning-centered organization. Cross-functional strategic teams and vertically integrated project teams did much of the basic work. These teams and groups became more effective through training. An Organizational Development Action Team (ODAT) was responsible for ensuring that training in communication skills, team effectiveness, meeting effectiveness, conflict resolution, and customer service was offered. To provide this training, ODAT identified 50 "movers and shakers," or informal campus leaders, who could be trained to train others. By 1996, over 300 Lane staff had participated in communication training.

As Jerry Moskus, president of Lane, said, "Working in teams does not come naturally to educators socialized to be strong individualists, suspicious of movements and groups." Fortunately, educational institutions have the internal resources to provide education and training for their own members, and this formidable resource can be used to prepare stakeholders for the new behaviors required in a Learning College.

A number of colleges have created very visible signs of their support for the learning initiative by offering special grants to encourage faculty to focus their expertise on related projects. For example, Sinclair sets aside $200,000 a year for The Learning Challenge Awards. The awards are designed to support projects that will improve and expand student learning, and are made only to teams to encourage collaboration. The proposals from faculty teams must include activities related to student learning outcomes that can be measured. Fleming College provides similar incentives with a $100,000 a year special budget to encourage innovative grants in curriculum development and instructional processes that will improve and expand student learning.

*Ensure Trustee Support and Involvement.* Since creating a Learning College is a major change for an institution, the governing board must be fully involved from the beginning. The trustees will need to participate in training sessions and begin to prepare for policy and resource changes that will be the result of philosophical and structural changes. If the entire architecture of education needs to be changed, as has been called for by a number of national task forces and commissions, this is serious business that cannot occur without the full support of the trustees.

Throughout 1994 and 1995, the governing board of Maricopa Community Colleges held a series of Strategic Conversations on such topics as chaos theory, new learning paradigms, leadership and the new science, system unity, diversity, and continuous quality improvement. These conversations were facilitated by faculty, classified staff, students, and administrators, and served to illustrate Maricopa's commitment to involving all stakeholders. Through the Strategic Conversations many ideas emerged, networks were formed, and new structures evolved. The governing board members grew in their understanding of the issues, and in their commitment to the goals of the comprehensive and complex project designed to help Maricopa become a learning-centered institution.

At Fleming, the board chair and other board members are very involved in providing leadership for the transformation. Board members and the president collaborate and provide mutual support on contentious issues, when they arise, particularly when these issues attract public attention. The monthly board agenda includes items related to the transformation process, and a number of change issues are addressed by standing committees of the board. The board holds an annual retreat to review and help anticipate strategies related to the transformation, and board members are actively engaged in a variety of college meetings and activities. In addition, business leaders on the board and in the community facilitate the transformation proces by sharing their own experiences of changes taking place in their organizations, and by advocating on behalf of the college.

More and more trustees in community colleges are becoming aware of concepts associated with the Learning College. As one example, community college leaders in Michigan have launched a statewide learning initiative in

collaboration with Michigan State University. Guidelines for the initiative, titled *Becoming a Learning College*, published in 1998, spell out specific responsibilities of trustees in creating a Learning College:

> The Board of Trustees must work together to promote commitment and development opportunities for each of its members.
>
> **Commitment**
> - Establish board commitment to a Learning College.
> - Become change agents for the Learning College by:
>   - Setting the pace for the college community;
>   - Empowering the president to address change issues;
>   - Developing external links consistent with changing community needs;
>   - Maintaining accountability to the larger community for serving its diverse needs.
>
> **Development Opportunities**
> - Encourage all trustees to become continual learners.
> - Provide opportunities for the trustees to become more knowledgeable of the Learning College concept (Michigan State University, 1998 p. 6).

**Create an Open System of Communication**

If convening a single meeting and distributing one key paper about the Learning College are the only efforts to bring about change, an intended initiative is doomed to an early death. This is not a project that can succeed by tossing one stone in the pond and following up on all the ripples. Creating a Learning College means tossing hundreds of stones into the pond, dumping boulders into the pond, and even filling in the pond and digging a new one. This kind of change will not occur unless the community of stakeholders is kept fully informed on a regular basis about what is happening, and unless there are mechanisms provided whereby they can communicate across the entire community of participants. Fortunately, technological innovations now exist, and are being installed in many community colleges, that allow for a rich exchange of information and opportunities for intimate connectivity.

Wilson says, "If a vision is to shape the future and drive action, then the leader–and others in executive positions–must communicate it broadly, consistently, and continuously, until it becomes an integral part of the organization's culture" (1996, p. 5).

The message must be driven home again and again through speeches, newsletters, meetings, articles, interviews, surveys, and actions. Kotter suggests that business executives who communicate well incorporate the message in their hour-by-hour activities:

> In a routine discussion about a business problem, they talk about how proposed solutions fit (or don't fit) into the bigger picture. In a regular performance appraisal, they talk about how the employee's behavior helps or undermines the vision. In a review of the division's quarterly performance, they talk not only about the numbers but also about how the division's executives are contributing to the transformation. In a routine Q & A with employees at a company facility, they tie their answers back to renewal goals. (1995, p. 64).

The project manager has major responsibility for ensuring that the mechanisms are in place for the communication that is needed. The CEO of the college needs to take responsibility for many "official" roles in communicating about project activities, as well as many unofficial ones. If the initiative is led by a faculty task force, its members must participate actively and often to ensure continuing communication. As the project emerges and matures, more and more participants will take responsibility for communicating their needs and their ideas.

The colleges cited in this monograph as examples of institutions committed to becoming

more learning centered are healthy institutions that do not always have to build new processes to get their work done. For example, many of these colleges already rely on open systems of communication.

Jerry Moskus says that "Lane's efforts to create an open system of communication predates its efforts to become a learning-centered college. In the late 1980s, the college embraced shared decision making, a system that enabled all stakeholders to contribute to the institution's process of decision making. A new governance system was established to support shared decision making, and this structure provided a means for involving many stakeholders in implementing the new learning-centered vision."

Lane capitalized on its existing open system of communication to launch the new learning-centered vision by disseminating a paper on the new direction to all staff. Then the president and vice presidents met with each department to discuss the paper. The vision statement was included in many college publications and referenced on the college letterhead. The campus newsletter, *The Daily*, which is distributed to all staff members, frequently includes articles and attachments related to the new vision.

At Fleming *The Transformation* newsletter is issued periodically to keep staff updated on the restructuring and transformation process. As with Lane, open communication and consultation are fundamental values ingrained in the culture of Fleming. In many ways they are not acting differently than they have in the past, although the content of the message has changed to support the transformation of the culture to become more learning centered. Fleming uses a variety of communication methods including meetings, e-mail, hard copy memos and documents, and the Internet. Sinclair takes advantage of groupware systems to involve its constituents in an open system of communication.

At the Community College of Denver, a partnership of faculty members, classified staff, and administrators has been in place since 1986 to help the college move from a deficiency model of student achievement to a success model in which each person and unit seeks to support student learning. From holding philosophical discussions to undertaking practical problem solving, the faculty and staff at CCD have been building a culture focused on student success that has as its cornerstone collaborative decision making. A professor in the arts department at St. Louis Community College at Florrisant Valley (Missouri) remarked on the team effort and good communication at the Community College of Denver on a recent visit: "I am very impressed with the team effort at CCD. Everyone seems to work together on common themes. Energy does not seem to be wasted on politics. The staff seems aligned on common goals and processes. It was absolutely awe inspiring to hear and see all of the fine things you were doing."

**Consider Consultants and Established Processes**

Several of the colleges engaged in creating Learning Colleges have made effective use of external consultants. In some cases, consultants can provide an overall perspective on educational reform and the growing emphasis on learning, and these consultants are useful in addressing the entire faculty and staff or in making presentations to the board of trustees and key community groups. Other consultants are specialists in some key area such as chaos theory, portfolio assessment, brain-based research, or technological networks; they are useful in meetings with groups working on specific projects. Process consultants can be brought in to train facilitators or can be used on a continuing basis to facilitate group meetings.

Consultants are educational resources and should be used wisely. They can escalate learning for stakeholders, challenge reluctant participants, help identify other resources, and provide information on what other institutions are doing across the country. But consultants do not make the same commitments to the project as do college leaders, they do not have to suffer the same consequences, and they are not in the project for the long haul. Consultants should be used for what they can offer, but they should not be expected to shoulder primary responsibility. College leaders and staff must own the project. Responsibility for the kind of change involved in

creating a Learning College cannot be handed off to others, no matter how competent or highly recommended they come.

Consultants have enabled the staff at Lane to learn new skills in support of the new learning-centered vision. A husband and wife team of communication consultants trained large numbers of staff in workplace communication skills needed for teamwork. The redesign of student services was undertaken with the day-to-day assistance of outside experts in process reengineering. The faculty effort to redesign instruction has occasionally involved invited speakers on instructional topics. When implementation of the new vision produced conflicts within campus departments and teams, an expert on mediation was hired to teach mediation skills and to help particular groups resolve existing conflicts. The development of new values statements to define future work roles and relationships among staff was guided by an expert on labor relations. A management consultant helped the Executive Leadership Group move from the traditional president's cabinet structure to a leadership team.

At Fleming, consultants are used sparingly and in a very focused way. Staff members at Fleming often ask consultants for a range of options to be considered, but the staff themselves actually select the option that fits best with the culture of Fleming. Consultants are usually sought who have content expertise and facilitation skills not readily available on campus. However, Fleming values and recognizes the consulting skills of its own staff and has created several formal consultant roles in the college, including the Human and Organizational Development Consultants and the Training and Development Services Consultants.

Colleges may also want to consider borrowing some of the specialized processes that have been designed for other settings. The total quality management and continuous quality improvement movements, for example, have designed a number of detailed processes for identifying problems, designing alternative solutions, making decisions, improving communication, assessing skills, and building community that will prove useful in changing the organizational culture of a college. These processes are updated versions of techniques that have been around for some time, but they have been improved through refinement and through application and testing in varied settings. Many of the TQM processes are refined versions of techniques described in Alex F. Osborne's *Creative Imagination*, issued decades ago. Current processes also reflect a great deal of experimentation with "T" groups and encounter groups that dominated educational processes in the 1960s.

Processes in current use have their own language, their own special names, and special champions. Many are outlined in step-by-step detail and accompanied by training manuals. These processes are not magic solutions, however, and they are seldom based on scientific experimentation. In the right hands they can usually achieve their purpose. College leaders and the project manager should review these processes carefully and select the ones that will work best in the established culture of the college. Every consultant will champion his or her favorite process, and faculty will recommend the process they have most recently experienced.

While some colleges may hire consultants who bring their own specialized processes to bear on activities at the college, other institutions adapt these special processes to their own culture. Leaders at Fleming, for example, say, "We have not adopted any particular large-scale, established process such as TQM in any major way; these tend to be viewed as 'gimmicky' at our place. We tend to create our own by adapting aspects of established processes to our own culture. However, we do use a variety of established tools, including brainstorming, force-field analysis, process design, Delphi techniques, and focus groups."

**Pay Attention to Language**

Colleges that want to become Learning Colleges should examine their official documents and their daily language to ascertain what priorities are being conveyed. At Palomar College (California) leaders reviewed official documents and incorporated the language of their newly developed learning paradigm in all their

documents. Student learning is now a clear purpose in the mission statement of the college. Student learning is everyone's job, as indicated in revised job descriptions. Recruitment brochures now indicate the college's commitment to student learning and its interest in receiving applications from individuals who share that commitment. College goals now include student learning outcomes as key elements. The president of Palomar College, George Boggs, says, "College educators need to be sure they are saying what they intend to say."

It is possible, of course, to create new language but retain old beliefs and behaviors. Seasoned community college educators can spot with ease those who do not "walk the talk." Faculty are fully aware of leaders who trot out new language that is not fortified with new beliefs and new behaviors. Such action is a vacuous exercise that serves only to harden existing layers of cynicism.

President Jerry Moskus at Lane believes that renaming phenomena can actually lead to change in behavior. "More and more," he says, "the word 'learning' is being used in place of 'education' and 'learner' is replacing 'student.' The word 'learner' has proven useful to describe the large group of people served by Lane who are not enrolled in formal classes and thus are not really students in the formal sense. The campus radio station takes on a different meaning when its mission is viewed as producing learning rather than merely informing or entertaining its listeners. The Retired Senior Volunteer Program has changed its emphasis from providing services to helping seniors and volunteers learn."

In addition to the Learning Challenge Grants at Sinclair, noted earlier, a number of strategic task forces have adopted the language of learning. Everyone at Sinclair has participated in the development of a Mission Model that has "learning" as its central focus and that identifies how each employee's work group contributes to and measures its contribution to learning.

Leaders at Fleming are deeply aware of the importance of language, and they have made sure they retain the old language that reinforces the culture and make connections to Fleming's history, tradition, and strengths. The terms "quality," "caring," and "future orientation" are key words from an early vision statement at Fleming, and leaders continue to use these key words to express core institutional values.

Fleming has also introduced new language into the institutional culture to signal the changes that are occurring. The word "learning" has been added to the mission statement; leaders are referred to as "leaders" rather than as managers or supervisors; alternative delivery systems are now referred to as "distributed learning"; independent study has become "guided learning"; and although teachers are still referred to as teachers, the term "facilitators of learning" is openly discussed. In their job postings for new staff, the new language is demonstrated in such phrases as "demonstrated participatory leadership skills," "effective team member," "facilitation and team-building skills," and ability to "establish an appropriate learning environment for students."

As community colleges explore and experiment with Learning College models, there is an opportunity to create a new language about learning, a language specific to community colleges. In the past, community colleges have borrowed a great deal of the language used by universities and four-year colleges to describe their own values and their practices. Currently community colleges are busy adapting language from business and industry. Surely there is a special language of learning embedded in the idiosyncratic experiences of community college faculty as they continue decade after decade to provide learning opportunities for the most challenging learners in all of higher education.

**Reallocate Resources**

Very few community colleges, if any, operating in the current economic climate of reengineering and downsizing, have the resources to support new projects, especially projects of the magnitude and duration associated with creating a Learning College. In almost all cases, current resources will have to be reallocated to support project efforts, and, there is not a great deal of experience from which to derive guidelines.

Some creative college leaders have actually used the financial depressions in their institutions as leverage to launch a Learning College. At

Jackson Community College in Michigan the picture was particularly bleak. The college had lost 12 tax elections in a row; equipment was obsolete; enrollment was dropping; collective bargaining agreements left no room for negotiation; and the district had lost hundreds of base manufacturing jobs over the last few years. This situation, along with the appointment of a new president, was used as a precipitating condition–a trigger event–to initiate a very successful transformation toward becoming a Learning College.

There may be lessons to be learned regarding the reallocation of resources from a restructuring project supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts. A number of institutions of higher education, including community colleges, held round table discussions and designed projects to restructure their institutions for the future. Recognizing that "the need for academic restructuring owes much of its urgency to tough financial times" (*Policy Perspectives*, April, 1994, p. 8a), college participants addressed the issue of declining resources, and a number of recommendations emerged in the project's newsletter, *Policy Perspectives*. The core recommendation relates to reducing the high, labor-intensive cost of higher education by reducing the number of faculty and administrators. The following summary of these recommendations comes from the February 1993 and April 1994 issues of *Policy Perspectives*.

- Higher education remains an enterprise too often prone to define progress in terms of addition rather than substitution or subtraction (1994, p. 8a).
- A variety of institutions over the past 12 months have confirmed our sense that where institutions have succeeded most they have done so principally by imposing budget discipline in response to changes in their circumstances. Such discipline is a necessary first step in reshaping the culture of an institution (1993, p. 6a).
- The institution must establish the "priority" changes it needs to make and then set goals for substantial and lasting changes in each of these areas, sending the message that marginal changes will not be sufficient (1993, p. 6a).
- The kinds of saving and reductions in current expenditures that are required both to offset diminished revenues and to provide sufficient capital for investment in new programs cannot be achieved without setting aside the principle that personnel reductions will only be made if all else fails (1994, p. 8a).
- In times of transition the first instinct of most institutions is to protect the faculty. We believe, however, that this transition is different. Changes in how faculty regard themselves and their institutions lie at the heart of the restructuring process (1993, p. 9a).
- A substantial portion of the administrative growth of the past decade. . . has resulted from the entrepreneurial instincts of administrative staff and the sense on the part of senior administrators that it is easier to solve a problem by creating a new administrative unit than by making an established unit take on a task not of its own choosing. Accordingly, restructuring needs to begin on the administrative side of the house (1993, p. 9a).
- Given strong leadership and a sustained commitment to the retraining of current staff, we believe that a five-to-seven year process designed to reengineer operations can yield a 25 percent reduction in the number of full time employees an institution requires (1993, p. 7a).
- Fundamentally, restructuring will strengthen institutions precisely be-ecause the process itself will force a sustained reexamination of functions and procedures that have grown haphazardly over the last three decades (1993, p. 7a).

This is pretty brutal stuff for most educators. This is the kind of discussion that weakens the

resolve of community college leaders to lead change and strengthens the resolve of faculty unions and administrators to resist change. Open discussion about changing the rules of the labor-intensive formula in higher education creates faculty concern that the call for transformation and change is actually an attempt to get rid of faculty. That may be the motivation of some community college administrators–allegiance to movements is used for all kinds of purposes–*but it is not the position advocated here.* Healthy institutions will be able to deal with this issue openly and honestly; unhealthy institutions will use the issue to feed their neuroses.

There are responsible administrators, however, operating in healthy institutions today who will address this issue head-on, and these are the leaders and the institutions that will create the models of the Learning College of the future. Chancellor William Wenrich of the Dallas County Community College District has linked the faculty productivity role with the need for a new model of learning:

> Increasing "educational productivity" relates to one of two alternatives: 1) increasing the quality or quantity of learning by students without increasing cost proportionately, or 2) maintaining the quality and quantity of student learning while reducing the proportional cost. The key element is to make more effective use of the most critical learning resource, the full-time faculty members. (1994, p. 1).

He goes on to define a new role for faculty as "masters of the learning environment" and notes that "some faculty will be unwilling or unable to adapt to this new paradigm. To the extent financially feasible, they should continue to teach in a traditional mode, but upon their departure, their replacements should be expected to exhibit the professional skills to be masters of the learning environment" (p. 1). This humane but clear approach is one example of how community college leaders can implement new structures to reallocate resources to ensure support for the creation of Learning Colleges.

Healthy colleges do not shy away from reallocating resources to make internal changes in their organizations that address new realities and new opportunities to become more learning-centered institutions. Fleming College provides a dramatic example of how the reallocation of resources can lead to a more creative and workable organizational structure that supports efforts to become more learning centered. In 1995, Fleming had to face a 20 percent reduction in its overall budget because of reduced support from the federal and provincial governments in Canada. Based on some of the recommendations made by the Pew Charitable Trusts, Fleming's organizational design team recommended a one-third reduction in administrative ranks to model the scope of the changes that would be required of the front-line services and academic programs. Deans and chairs were replaced by academic team leaders, who were drawn primarily from faculty ranks and were selected by faculty members with agreement from the faculty bargaining unit. A comprehensive memorandum of understanding was developed with the faculty union, and both management and the union agree that, to date, the new model is working extremely well.

In essence, the college broke up the old administrative structure common to most colleges and established six centers of specialization in such areas as natural resources, community development and health, law and justice, management and business studies, interdisciplinary studies, and applied computing and information technology. Academic team leaders selected by faculty members and their team members are fully responsible for the daily operation of each center including such responsibilities as staff hiring, formative faculty evaluation, professional development, budget development and monitoring, program development, evaluation of team performance and leadership, and marketing and promotion of the center's programs. This new organizational structure eliminated an entire layer of managers and brought the work of the faculty closer to those responsible for making learning happen. The college also terminated four programs, modified eight, and gave sixteen others two years to make improvements.

The Community College of Denver has also taken steps to reallocate resources in a very dramatic way. It has become a leader in actually

implementing, with faculty support, a faculty pay-for-performance schedule. Using an evaluation scheme that was developed by the faculty, based on a collective set of teaching and learning values, faculty receive differentiated pay based on their performance and their contributions to helping the institution meet its overall core indicators of effectiveness focused on student success.

**Evaluate, Evaluate, Evaluate**

Community colleges have not traditionally paid much attention to evaluating their activities or assessing student outcomes, but in recent years that situation has begun to change. Along with the rest of higher education, community colleges have been strongly influenced by the assessment movement, particularly in response to new standards set by the regional accrediting associations, and calls for accountability and mandates of performance-based funding by state legislators. Assisted by improved assessment tools and new technologies, such as computer-assisted assessment, community colleges are beginning to undertake the systematic assessment and evaluation of all their activities.

At Sinclair Community College, interest in student assessment actually prepared the way for Sinclair's journey to become a Learning College. In 1985 college staff began discussing the need to develop learning outcomes for each of the college's programs. A number of major initiatives emerged as a result of this discussion, and, by 1990, Sinclair had a comprehensive and exemplary institution-wide assessment program in place. Sinclair's president in 1990, David Ponitz, noted that "the goal for an institution-wide assessment effort was to improve student learning and the processes that contribute to effective and efficient learning." Without using the language of "the Learning College," Sinclair had taken a major step in that direction when it established as a priority the commitment to develop "processes that contribute to effective and efficient learning."

In 1991 the pace of the Sinclair journey picked up when the college embraced total quality management. In developing a new vision statement, each department wrote mission statements that specified the departmental roles in contributing to learning as the central mission of the college. Because Sinclair had spent time in developing an effective system of assessment to measure student learning, it was natural for college staff to want to assess the effectiveness of their mission statements. Six core indicators of institutional effectiveness have since been adopted, and critical success factors have been identified for each core indicator. Sinclair is well on its way to creating a Learning College within the framework of a detailed and effective system of evaluation.

Fleming has had a teacher and course evaluation process in place for about four years. Each course and teacher is evaluated by students twice a year. The results are shared with individual faculty members and their leaders, and the aggregate results are shared with center teams in the college community, especially student associations interested in how the college is responding to student feedback. Fleming has also had a system of annual evaluation of administrators for many years. Two years ago the college introduced a multirater, multilevel, leader evaluation, which, in part, is intended to reinforce the new roles expected of leaders in a team-based organization.

In addition to evaluating personnel, Fleming has also developed a fairly comprehensive plan to evaluate programs and priorities. Annual priorities, indicators, and benchmarks are developed for each of the college's six basic goals. Performance indicators are used by the teams to identify areas which need improvement, as well as to identify the strategies that can make improvement possible. This information has been used in the restructuring process as a basis for determining which programs to terminate, modify, or place on notice.

The new team-based model has been evaluated annually to determine how staff members feel about their roles in the new structure. In addition, Fleming has identified nine characteristics of effective teams which the teams use as a basis for evaluating their progress. As the college changes its historical architecture to a team-based model, the leaders at Fleming want to know if the new architecture works better than the old.

Leaders at Fleming have raised the critical question: Do these changes in architecture actually enhance student learning? In the Applied Computing and Information Technology Center, the team has redesigned the curriculum to enhance student learning. Employers had been reporting that graduates from Fleming obtained the vocational technical skills required for employment, but they also indicated that graduates needed more skills associated with problem solving, working in teams, self-direction, and interactions with others. As a result of this feedback from employers, the team in the Applied Computing and Information Technology Center developed a new curriculum model that includes a final semester focused on these team-based problem-solving skills that is untimed, student led, faculty mentored, and project based. The chief academic officer at Fleming, Terry Dance-Bennink said, "We believe that this level of innovation was encouraged and supported by the team-based model which expects teams to be more accountable for the success of their area, and which concomitantly, has empowered teams to make decisions about what innovation and strategies to pursue, develop, and implement."

At the Community College of Denver there has been a strong emphasis on evaluation for over a decade. Cited by the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges for its exemplary evaluation and accountability models, the college prepares annual reports on student success and prints student evaluations of the college and its faculty in its class schedules. President Byron McClenney reports, "This open process of sharing the outcome measures has created a climate in which every staff member at the Community College of Denver wants to perform well and is proud of the performance of the institution."

The 1993 report from the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges highlights many of the characteristics of the college that illustrate its commitment to Learning College practices. The report is worth citing in some detail as illustration:

> The planning initiatives of CCD that the team in 1987 cited as exemplary have been extended and elaborated to address the spirit of accountability and planning as well as its intention. The entire college community collaborated in shaping the plans for the future and in deciding on the allocation of funds for each of the initiatives. The accountability measures were equally discussed, determined, and activated by those most involved as well as those who provided an outside vision. Administrators, classified staff, advisory groups, and faculty participated fully. To the credit of the college, they endeavored mightily to secure full student input, but as is often the case in a community college, the students' input was often limited due to other commitments students constantly faced.
>
> However, the input from the college faculty was sought, analyzed, utilized, and the resulting measures for accountability and effectiveness were accepted by all involved. Then the results arrived. The college shared the results with everyone, discussed the ramifications of the surveys, of the tests, of the assessment scores, of the telephone interviews, and of the follow-ups to decide just what the results indicated. Then the college instituted new programs, new policies, new measures, and undertook the entire process once again. As a result, the accountability and effectiveness measurements are part of the college fabric, and the results are seen as starting points for next year's efforts.
>
> As the number of students tested has increased, so has the sophistication with which the college has examined the data. With larger numbers participating, more complex analysis by student groups has been undertaken, and specific needs have been noted. Once a need has been determined, the college sought to build its student and academic support models to address the need and then evaluated the results of this service.
>
> As a result, the process is, in theory and in practice, a complete cycle. Data are not

accumulated to fill reports that remain on shelves. This college uses the data to improve retention, to ask itself just what it is looking for in teaching, how it can assist students who enter with lower academic skills, and what assistance teachers need to do a better job. Frankly the team was pleased to evaluate a college that undertook the planning/accountability/assessment activities in the spirit in which they were meant. The college decided to take a look at itself and to improve what it was doing and then to present this information to the community and ultimately to the state.

The Community College of Denver has developed a cycle of evaluation and assessment that is probably one of the best in a community college in North America. As a result of this attention to evaluating their policies, programs, and practices and of using the evaluations to improve, the college has assembled some powerful data on institutional effectiveness:

- Increase in number of graduates 1987 to 1997 - 82 percent
- Number of people of color as percent of total number of graduates
  1987 - 22 percent
  1997 - 44 percent
- 1997 graduates employed or engaged in further study - 97 percent
- Employer satisfaction with skills of graduates - 100 percent
- Transfer student GPA - 3.0

Creating a Learning College is, in part, a journey into the unknown. Evaluating activities along the way is necessary to gauge progress and make corrections. Only by evaluating what is happening and what has been achieved will community colleges be able to develop models of the Learning College that others will want to emulate.

**Commit to the Long Haul**

In 1986 Miami-Dade Community College initiated its well-known Teaching and Learning Project that resulted in, among other things, the creation of 100 distinguished teaching chairs. Not anticipating that the project would become so large or take so long, former president Robert McCabe began referring to the initiative as "The Project That Ate Miami-Dade" (Jenrette and Napoli, 1994, p. 258).

Time is the enemy of all projects designed to initiate major change. Linda Thor, president of Rio Salado Community College in Phoenix, notes this fact in reference to her college's total quality initiative. "If there is one simple process required to implement quality leadership in an organization. . . It is, simply put, TIME. It will not–it cannot–happen quickly. . ." (Thor, 1996, p. 114).

In their efforts to create a Learning College at Jackson Community College, Lee Howser and Carol Schwinn also note the importance of planning for the long haul. "Making cultural changes in an organization takes an extraordinary amount of time. Whatever the original time line, double it! . . fundamental change requires conflict resolution and substitution of old behaviors. The process just takes time."

Jerry Young, president of Chaffey College in California, has indicated that he worked for five years as a new president at Chaffey to open up the system to the point faculty could say, "This isn't working." Just building an awareness of the problems will be a long process for some colleges, and this stage must precede any meaningful action toward becoming a Learning College.

At Fleming College, leaders have been concerned about the pace of change and recognize that a college and its culture can become "unglued" if the change is overwhelming and not managed. With a 20 percent reduction in its overall budget in 1995, the college was placed in crisis mode, but the leaders had already established an overall framework for change and had created a culture of trust in which they could operate to make this situation work for the benefit of the college. President Brian Desbiens developed a metaphor for the change process that would prove very effective. The first period of change lasted for about 18 months and was very intensive and traumatic. Desbiens referred to this

period of the college's life as operating in white-water rapids. He communicated to faculty and staff that the period of white-water rapids would eventually flow into a bay in which they could slow down the pace, examine their progress, and set new goals for the future. The metaphor worked exceedingly well in describing the reality of the change efforts at Fleming, and the college designed many of its actions around the timeline provided by the metaphor. The really difficult, major changes were implemented in a specified period of time, and the college was able to announce with some confidence when the "worst" part of the change was over. Recognition of these peak periods of change has helped the college steer its course over the long haul on its journey to become a more learning-centered college.

Jerry Moskus at Lane Community College notes, "While it is certainly true that implementing the Learning College concept takes a long time, it is also true that we in community colleges must learn to take less time to implement new initiatives. Part of the appeal of the Learning College is that it promises to make community colleges more flexible and responsive." The community college does face a challenging dilemma trying to operate between the traditional culture of higher education, which takes its time in making changes, and the culture of the business community, where change is often immediate and dramatic.

Leaders planning to launch a Learning College should be realistic about the time it will take to create this new educational enterprise. Changing the historical architecture designed in earlier agricultural and industrial periods will require years of destruction and construction, not to mention the time it will take to change the behaviors of those who represent "1,000 years of tradition wrapped in 100 years of bureaucracy," a description of higher education cited earlier offered by Roger Moe, Majority Leader of the Minnesota State Senate.

**Celebrate Changes and Accomplishments**

In an effort as comprehensive and complex as creating a Learning College, it is a good idea to develop a culture of celebration that recognizes milestones of special achievement. Real transformation of the educational culture takes a very long time, and celebrating short-term wins can keep the momentum going. Most staff will not join the long journey unless they can see results along the way, preferably during the early stages.

Some early achievements might include a general awareness of problems and issues and a general consensus of the need for change–no mean achievement for many institutions. Institution-wide agreement on new values and mission statements is an achievement to be noted and appropriately celebrated. The creation of a new student assessment system or a new organizational structure, or the addition of new information technologies may be worth celebrating. Leaders should orchestrate celebrations and opportunities for recognition around each of these milestones and use each one to vault to the next.

It is important, however, not to celebrate a short-term achievement as final victory. The premature victory celebration stops momentum and provides opportunity for traditional forces to regain territory. Each celebration should be planned as an opportunity to leverage new plans. Kotter advises business leaders to capitalize on every achievement as a passage to the next:

> Instead of declaring victory, leaders of successful efforts use the credibility afforded by short-term wins to tackle even bigger problems. They go after systems and instructors that are not consistent with the transformation vision and have not been confronted before. They pay great attention to who is promoted, who is hired, and how people are developed. They include new reengineering projects that are even bigger in scope than the initial ones (1995, p. 66).

Several of the colleges cited here, as good examples of institutions becoming more learning centered, celebrate their achievements in very concrete and visible ways with ceremonies to recognize new facilities and new programs. The Learning Resource Center at Fleming College and its Learning Commons provided a very concrete

example of how college teams were developing a new model based upon learning principles. As staff members at Fleming said, "During our restructuring period, we kept the vision, and the emerging reality, of the LRC front and center as a symbol of our future directions and to help boost morale through concretely investing in our future." Fleming also organized a successful celebration when it opened its new Student Center and used the occasion as an opportunity to recognize the effective leadership demonstrated by students.

The opening of Sinclair's Center for Interactive Learning in late 1998 was a great cause for state and national celebration. The Center for Interactive Learning is a major new structure on Sinclair's campus, but it is also the embodiment of a new spirit committed to translating policies, programs, and practices into more learning-centered activities.

Sinclair also celebrated its success in revising the traditional architecture with a fall 1998 conference for all employees, with a theme that included "Disappearance of Traditional Boundaries." Over 50 initiatives developed by various college teams were nominated by peers to be featured in a special fair honoring college heroes who had made changes that are eliminating traditional boundaries at Sinclair Community College.

Lane Community College has celebrated the achievements of milestones for years. At the beginning of its journey to become a more learning-centered college, Lane held a restructuring ceremony complete with refreshments and entertainment. Two vice presidents came dressed as the Blues Brothers, the Research and Planning Choir performed, and the president and others spoke about why change was needed and what changes were envisioned.

Once each month Lane staff gather at a scheduled celebration hour to recognize special employees with awards. Ice cream, cake, and entertainment are provided, and managers are encouraged to allow as many staff as possible to attend. The event always concludes with opening the microphone to anyone who wants to recognize a staff member or group for special service. The monthly celebrations have provided a pleasant and memorable way to recognize college milestones and individual staff achievements.

One of the reasons for developing systematic approaches to evaluation is to be able to document institutional achievements. When learning begins to saturate the culture, and when structures and programs have been designed to increase and to expand learning, then the evaluation and assessment systems will document the success as a sound basis for celebration.

Colleges that refocus their basic systems on learning by expanding learning options for students, engaging students as full partners in the learning process, designing educational structures to meet learner needs, defining the roles of learning facilitators based on the needs of learners, and measuring their success based on increased and expanded learning for students, will create an educational enterprise that can help students make passionate connections to learning. These accomplishments will be worth great celebration in the institution and throughout society. The Learning College that places learning first and provides educational experiences for learners any way, any place, and any time, has great potential for fulfilling this dream.

# EPILOGUE

As community colleges embrace the Learning Revolution, they will begin to launch journeys to become more learning-centered institutions. In this brief monograph, key steps of that journey have been outlined and illustrated with examples from a small group of pioneering community colleges. The steps outlined here are relevant to most efforts to bring about institutional change, with one major difference. This journey will take a college and its leaders into unknown territory from which they are not likely to return. This is not a journey that tinkers around the edges of change, and that reaches its destination when a new program is tacked onto the crumbling architecture of the past. This journey calls for radical change: 1) to place learning first in every policy, program, and practice, and 2) to overhaul the traditional architecture of higher education.

In the early flat maps of the world, cartographers warned "Beyond this place be dragons and monsters." For those brave leaders willing to launch institution-wide initiatives to become more learning centered, there may be dragons and monsters ahead; there will surely be major battles. A key battle will take place in efforts to change the traditional architecture that most of us in education have learned to navigate successfully. Why would we want to change an educational system that has rewarded us and in which we prosper? George Washington is reported to have said:

> One of the difficulties in bringing about change in an organization is that you must do so through the persons who have been successful in that organization, no matter how faulty the system or organization is. To such persons, you see, it is the best of all possible organizations, because look who was selected by it and look who succeeded most within it. Yet, these are the very people through whom we must bring about improvements.

If we are to bring about the changes recommended in this monograph, we must struggle with our own demons that would keep us mired in the past. That struggle can lead us to move beyond the edge of chaos to discover a new world of education, a bright, new world in which the learning of our students guides our practice, sets our policies, and determines our programs. It is a journey well worth launching.

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